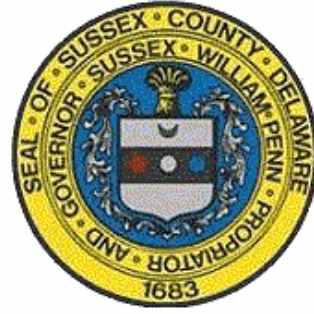


News Release



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Sussex County tax ditches see surge of funds

GEORGETOWN, Del. – It's not just rainwater that has poured into Sussex County's drainage ditches lately. On Tuesday, Oct. 18, Sussex County Council showered them with much-needed money.

County Council presented a \$175,000 check to the Sussex Conservation District, a quasi-governmental agency that will use the money to clean and maintain 1,393 miles of drainage ditches in the approximately 950-square-mile county.

Sussex County is home to 136 tax ditches, which total the most in mileage of any county in the state, according to the conservation district. That network of drainage ditches absorbs excess rainwater from some 340,000 acres throughout the county.

Tax ditch organizations are established for each tax ditch. Property owners within the watershed of those ditches are taxed for the construction and maintenance of their respective ditch. Those taxes pay half the cost, while state and county funds cover the rest.

"Needless to say, it's very much appreciated," Bill Vanderwende, chairman of the conservation district's board, said of Council's grant. "It helps us catch up on the maintenance work that needs to be done on our tax ditches in the county."

Sussex County, by law, must budget \$75,000 annually for the conservation district to help with drainage cost.

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That money is matched at the state level, for a total of \$150,000 each year.

The past two years, however, the General Assembly has awarded the Sussex Conservation District \$100,000 in additional money, contingent upon matching funds from Sussex County Council. In August, Council approved awarding Sussex Conservation District the additional \$100,000 match.

In all, the district this budget year received \$350,000 from both the county and state governments.

Sussex County Administrator Robert L. Stickels said the nearly 1,400 miles of ditches snaking their way throughout Sussex County form a critical defensive system when it comes to protecting farms, communities and roads from flooding.

“After the recent heavy rains, it’s evident how important this program is,” Stickels said, noting the five to seven inches of rain that fell in Sussex County in the last two weeks. “And it’s important not just to farmers, but to communities as well.”

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